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SUBJECT: THAI FM TO ATTEND BURMA DONORS CONFERENCE

REF: STATE 53985

BANGKOK 00001568 001.2 OF 002

SUMMARY

1. (SBU Foreign Minister Noppadon Pattama would lead the Thai delegation to the Burma Donors Conference, MFA Department of East Asian Affairs Director Kallayana Vipattipumiprates told us on May 21. He said that the RTG shared USG concerns outlined in reftel. The Thais had a tentative plan for what they intended to pledge at the May 25 conference in Rangoon. However, the RTG awaited forthcoming reports expected from the visits to Burma of U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon and ASEAN Secretary General Surin Pitsuwan before the Thais made their intentions known. Kallayana also revealed that in the May 14 meeting between PM Samak and Burmese PM Thein Sein, the Burmese had repeatedly conveyed their deep appreciation for USG humanitarian assistance in the wake of Cyclone Nargis. End summary.

DONORS CONFERENCE WILL BREAK THE ICE

2. (SBU) The Thais welcomed the May 25 Burma Donors conference organized by ASEAN and the U.N. and intended to send FM Noppadon to Rangoon with a pledge for assistance from the RTG, according to MFA Department of East Asian Affairs Director Kallayana Vipattipumiprates. The Thais wanted to make sure that their pledge was appropriate to the needs of the Burmese and neither too little or too much. At the same time, the Thais generally shared many of the same concerns as the USG with regards to providing humanitarian assistance to Burma. In particular, the RTG agreed with USG statements that the cyclone disaster had yet to transition from relief to reconstruction, as purported by the Burmese government. Therefore, total official assistance pledged by Thailand would rely heavily on two factors: readouts provided by UN SYG Ban Ki-moon and ASEAN SYG Surin Pitsuwan following their meetings with Burmese officials between May 20 - May 23; and to whom the money was to be pledged (Burmese government, UN, and/or ASEAN).

13. (SBU) The conference would be a significant event, Kallayana stated, as it would bring together the international community to discuss Burma. The Thais expected to emphasize this development at the conference, and capitalize on the gathering of so many players interested in Burma to begin a long term dialogue about the situation in their neighboring country. "The pledges for assistance would not end on Sunday," Kallayana pointed out, and he emphasized that there would have to be follow-up to the conversations begun at the donors conference. In Kallayana's view, the conference would focus on what has occurred in Burma over the past two weeks and what the international community can do in general terms with regards to relief and reconstruction.

SAMAK TO DISCUSS PLANS WITH UNSYG

14. (SBU) PM Samak is scheduled to meet with Ban Ki-moon when the U.N. SYG overnights in Bangkok on May 24, Kallayana told us. As of today (May 21), the meeting is slated to begin at 5:30 p.m. and continue over dinner to give the two leaders ample time to discuss the situation in Burma. Kallayana said that the UN and ASEAN would rely heavily on information provided by the Burmese government. Considering the extent of the humanitarian emergency Burma faced, and the effect of the impending donors conference, he believed that the Burmese had no choice but to provide accurate information to Surin and Ban Ki-moon.

BRITISH MAKING SIMILAR POINTS TO RTG

BANGKOK 00001568 002.2 OF 002

15. (SBU) We also spoke with British Embassy Political Chief Andy Garth on May 21, who indicated that his government planned to meet with FM Noppadon later that same day to convey their concerns about the upcoming donors conference, which were similar to ours. Garth mentioned that his government had yet to designate participants for the conference, but that it was considering doing so at the senior official level, including the head of Britain's international development agency. He expected that Britain would follow with USG, French, and German decisions about the level at which their government would send a representative.

BURMESE APPRECIATE USG ASSISTANCE

16. (SBU) At the conclusion of our conversation, Kallayana declared "you know that the Burmese really appreciate what you are doing." He went on to say that when PM Samak met with Burmese PM Thein Sein on May 14, the Burmese leader pointedly mentioned his appreciation for USG humanitarian assistance to the cyclone victims. Kallayana added that evidence of this appreciation was the Burmese government's decision to send their naval Commander in Chief (number five in the government in Kallayana's estimation) to meet U.S. Admiral Keating, who accompanied the first USG assistance flight to Rangoon on May 12.

JOHN